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794 346 bership of two million and a local membership of about fifty. There is nothing prepossessing about the small white building. The wooden floor is sprinkled with sawdust and except for the piano the only furniture is several roughly built wooden benches. The walls of the mission are hung with placards bearing inscriptions, of which the following are a few: "Peace—the Kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink, but joy, peace and good will," "Peace and Good Will to the World," "Peace, Father Divine is God, Salutation is Peace."

794 At about eight o'clock in the evening members begin straggling in, two or three at a time. They are dressed soberly, with a noticeable lack of bright colors and ornamentation of any description, as one of the precepts of the cult is the sacrifice of all worldly possessions. Upon joining the church they must surrender everything of material value to Father Divine. The old life is a thing of the past. The convert must accept new habits, new names, and an entirely new scheme of existence.

794 •793 The ardor of followers is not dampened by the fact that their leader has never been known to visit the Savannah branch. They claim that he is always present spiritually and can in this manner accomplish his miracles. At the meeting a major part of the service is given over to a number (796) of testimonials, presented by many of those present. One by one the converts intone their devotion to Father Divine* and vividly recount what he has done for them.

794 796 A stout Negro woman bearing the name of Sister Patience

curately portrays the House as it was found in this community. For this reason it was thought well to include it.

** Father Divine is said to have been born George Baker on a Hutchinson Island rice plantation near Savannah about sixty years ago. Sometime in the late 1890's it appears that he opened a meeting house in the Negro section of the Old Fort, calling himself "The Son of Righteousness." His activities in the community abruptly ceased when, after some trouble with the authorities, he fled from Savannah to escape a gang of whites who aimed to make him prove himself the reincarnation of Christ by walking on the Savannah River.*

Arriving in Baltimore, Maryland, he joined a religious sect headed by

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794 796 Peace * gives the following testimonial: "Once it wuz muh highes ambition tuh know duh tings uh duh worl. I loved cahds an drink an udduh vices. No day passed wen I wuz not so drunk dat I would gib out an hab tuh go tuh bed. Now it is not so. I hab nebuh seen duh Fathuh in duh body, but I know dat he is God, fuh I hab made spiritual contac wid him. Because uh rightous libin I am now weighin two hundud pouns. Praise Fathuh."

A thin, wiry little Negro man, ** whose eyes gleam with a fanatical light, speaks next. He gives his name as Noah's Ark and states that Father Divine has given him the power to raise his wife from the dead and has caused him to enter upon a new and sanctified life. Faithful Patience, the wife, is also present and in turn testifies as to the truth of his statement and as to her own faith in Father Divine.

Triumphant Virgin, † happy in the knowledge that she is now leading a blameless existence, steps forward and gives the following statement: "I know Fathuh Divine tuh be God cuz he lifted me out uh duh guttuh and changed me frum a drunkud an all udduh low tings dat I use tuh be.

• [793] *Father Jehovia. Later, in New York City the new disciple decided to open his own cult. It was then that he adopted his present name and that his converts created the maxim "Father Divine is God."*

Converts both white and Negro were eager to join the new order. Today Father Divine computes his followers as being between 21,000,000 and 30,000,000, although outsiders give a more conservative estimate. The leader travels extensively and "heavens" have been established in various parts of the country. His weekly income is reputed to be $20,000 and is derived from the many business establishments operated under his supervision.

He has a fondness for flashy clothing, wears a five dollar gold piece for a stickpin, and rides about in a pale blue Rolls Royce and a scarlet monoplane.

The self-styled Messiah has now extended his activities to the field of politics, both national and international. There is a variance of public sentiment concerning him. To followers he appears to be "reincarnated God," while enemies insist he is a fraud, a hypnotist, and a remarkably clever actor who is at present growing a little tired of the role he has chosen to enact.

Robert Allerton Parker, "The Incredible Messiah" (Boston, 1937), pp. 80, 93, 94, 106, 183, 188, 209–36.

** Sister Patience Peace, Old Fort.*

*** Noah's Ark, Old Fort.*

† Triumphant Virgin, Old Fort.

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794 796 Muh ole name is dead an now tings reign tru Fathuh Divine. Peace Thanks, Fathuh."

794 796 786 As the evening wears on, more of the devotees join in the chanting and in the spirited singing of the hymns. Demonstrations become more and more violent. Several of the congregation, caught in the throes of a powerful religious intoxication, begin to dance and sway with abandonment.[19] [533] Others in the group encourage the dancers with a rhythmic clapping of hands and stamping of feet.

[533] On and on the dancers whirl while the piano pounds out its accompaniment; above the din rises the wailed repetitious version of an improvised hymn. The participants in the dance seem oblivious to everything except the series of contortions in which they are indulging. Eyes half closed, fixed smiles on their faces, every muscle in their bodies aquiver, they stumble blindly on. Some bump into the wooden benches, others fall exhausted to the floor. Still the dance goes on.[46]

• [793] Over and over can be heard the hoarse chanting of the worshipers as they continue to give praise to Father Divine, the man who, according to their own account, was not born in the ordinary manner but was "combusted" one day in New York City and who was sent to earth to save his followers from destruction.

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Brownville

361 BROWNVILLE, MORE PROSPEROUS OF ASPECT THAN the Negro communities usually fringing business and industry, spreads westward along the edge of Savannah. Though (342) on its Currytown boundary it, too, contains the inevitable shacks in lanes, several of its streets, paved and tree shaded, are lined with good frame and brick houses which are occupied by the more well-to-do Negroes, among them teach- (368) ers, doctors, lawyers, and business men. A substantial school building and the Charity Hospital speak of advanced social consciousness.

368 On Bismark Street is found the House of Prayer, one of the many churches established throughout the country by Bishop Grace. Here several times each year the leader visits 794 his congregation, and the day on which "Daddy Grace" * [16] • (793) returns to his flock is always a gala occasion. Regular members and visitors from outlying districts crowd the heavy (352) lumber benches of the House of Prayer. The air is tense with excitement. Above the confusion can be heard the strident but rhythmic beat of drums.[23] Bright splashes of color 794 are given by the crepe paper decorations and the vividly 292 contrasting military costumes of members of the church organizations, among which are the Lilies of the Valley, the Queens, the Royal Guards, the Silver Leaf Band, the Transportation Committee, Male Ushers No. 1, Male Ushers No. 2, and the Sons and Daughters of the Prophet. Others in the

* *Though the meetings of Bishop Grace are common to many parts of the United States, it was thought well to include an accurate description of the House of Prayer as it was found in this community.*

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794 (292) congregation don their newest and most colorful garments. Preparation has been made for all emergencies. In attendance are burly guards whose duty it is to see that nothing occurs to disturb the smooth performance of the ceremonies. The floor has been thickly sprinkled with sawdust and the stout posts at the front of the church are padded to prevent injury to overzealous worshipers.

794 793 796 At the sudden sharp sound of a whistle all activity ceases; there is silence in the church. The Armor Bearers leave the building to escort the Bishop to his seat of honor. Soon they return, followed by the Queen who is arrayed in a pale green satin evening dress over which is worn a black velvet cape lined with scarlet. A double line of uniformed guards follows, and marching proudly between the lines is the Bishop. According to his own statement, the Holy Prophet, as his followers call him, is of Portuguese birth. His long dark hair which falls to his shoulders, his piercing eyes, his pointed beard, and sideburns all combine to give him a distinguished and unusual appearance.*

The procession continues to the front of the church, where, with much ceremony, the Bishop seats himself upon a lofty throne set far back on the spacious platform. The

* *Details of the early life of "Daddy Grace" are clothed in obscurity and little can be learned of the real origin of the House of Prayer. Some claim that he is of West Indian birth, others that he was born Marcilino Manuel Garcia in Portugal, and still others interpret his references to " a land beyond the sea" as indication that he hails from Egypt. All members of the cult must be baptized and during a four-week session in 1936 1,789 candidates were ministered to at a charge of $1.00 each. The Bishop advocates that members give generously of their material goods to the church and he has been known on occasions to go about among his congregation soliciting purses and demanding that worshipers sacrifice treasured jewelry. It is a well known fact that his profession of "spiritual leader" has proved a vastly profitable one, and in the course of the last several years he has amassed a huge fortune. Many of "Daddy's" enterprises are looked upon with disfavor and suspicion by the police department. His frequent clashes with the law over various matters of an extremely worldly nature serve only to increase the attendance and the collections at the church and also give the Bishop much desired publicity. Followers are unimpressed by his occasional arrests, secure in the knowledge that no earthly force can ever conquer "Daddy." See* Time (*New York*), *March 7, 1938, XXXI, No. 10, p. 30.*

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794 Queen stands at the Bishop's right, facing the congregation.
793 The music blares forth with renewed intensity and the entire
796 multitude, led by the uniformed guard, passes in single file before the throne. As members approach the Bishop, they pledge themselves to him by removing their hats and bowing low. In the midst of all this commotion "Daddy" sits, a remote, detached figure, his downcast eyes seemingly indicating that he is scarcely aware of this carefully planned reception.

794 Between the musical numbers several of the congregation
796 rise and loudly testify to the miracles that Bishop Grace [22]
[778] has performed in their behalf. A flourishing sale is con-
[432] ducted in consecrated handkerchiefs and copies of a news-
[755] paper published by the cult. These are believed to possess unusual healing powers.[8, 12] A ready market is also found for large pictures of the Bishop, for it is said that to chew up his likeness will cure many kinds of illness.

The grand march is spectacular. All those present assemble in the large center aisle. The band strikes up a lively measure and the procession starts. At the front of the church the line of march divides, half the people going down one side aisle, the other half going down the opposite one. At first the procession is orderly and fairly quiet, but
[533] as time passes, the music becomes increasingly loud. Above the brass instruments the steady throb of the drum can be heard. Voices are raised in accompaniment, feet stamp, shoulders sway, and hands clap.[19]

796 Around and around the procession winds. The singing
786 and dancing become wilder and more abandoned. Many now close their eyes, dancing blindly and stumbling into those near them and into the benches and posts. By this time the music is almost deafening and the noise made by the worshipers is equally loud. The muscles of their bodies twitching convulsively, they continue in their dance.[46]

Occasionally one of the participants stops, and, regard-

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796 794 Ebrybody gib at leas one nickel now wile we still hab duh privilege uh gibin tuh Daddy. Step up, ebrybody."

796 793 Until this point Bishop Grace, apparently indifferent, has had no active part in the ceremony, but he now steps forward. There is a sudden hush.

"Daddy" becomes an intimate, vivid part of the group. Coming down among the congregation, he addresses his talk now to one individual, now to another, dropping frequently into the southern Negro dialect. The theme of his address is, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap." The main issue, however, is often sidetracked, and the speaker comments in turn upon world politics, the war, anecdotes of his own trips abroad, his persecution by enemies, all of whom "the Lord struck down dead," and the general condition of the local community. The entire discourse is interspersed with humorous sayings that find a delighted response. "Daddy" advises his followers strongly against trusting anyone. "If the angel from Heaven comes down an wants an extra pair of wings, don't trust him," he warns. "Tell him you ain't got no time to keep books today. He have to pay cash." Near the conclusion of his talk the Bishop says that he can accomplish anything he chooses, even to sinking ships, destroying fleets of planes, or conquering entire nations. He is not the actual power, he says, but he is so close to it that he has only to reach out his hand and pull the switch.

After every sentence or two that "Daddy" utters his listeners echo his statements with such remarks as "Ain't it so, Daddy," "Dat is duh trute," "Yes Daddy," "You tell em, Daddy," "Hallelujah," "Amen." These utterances do not always agree with what the speaker has just said but nevertheless are meant to express thorough approbation. At one time "Daddy" tosses to a woman in the congregation a [786] rose he has used in illustrating a point in his sermon. This

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unexpected honor overcomes the recipient to such an extent that she is seized with violent convulsions.

Noticing that the hour is growing late, the Bishop abruptly ends his talk. There follows a prayer, led by one of the deacons and chanted rather than spoken. At the end of each line the man's voice catches on a high sob verging on hysteria, and those in the congregation murmur an almost inaudible echo of the speaker's plea. The other deacons join in the recital and in the wild sobbing. At the conclusion of the prayer a high pitch of excitement is reached.

It is now time for the Bishop to take leave of his flock. Slowly, reverently, his attendants bring him his top coat and high Stetson hat. From his pocket "Daddy" draws out a large white handkerchief which he waves slowly in accompaniment to the closing hymn, a corrupt version of *Nearer My God To Thee*. The worshipers, too, wave their handkerchiefs in solemn tribute to their departing leader.

Shortly after a visit from the Bishop we pursued our course of research in Brownville. We found a number of people who had been named for week days or the month in which they had been born. Thursday Jones,* when questioned about this particular custom, replied, "Dey name me dat way jis cuz uh happen tuh be bawn on Tursday, I guess. Sech tings seem tuh be in our fambly. I hab an uncle whose name is Monday Collins. It seem tuh come duh fus ting tuh folks' mine tuh name duh babies fuh duh day dey is bawn on." [20]

Another man ** told us, "We hab membuhs in our fambly name Monday, Friday, July an Augus. Dey jis didn tink ub any name tuh call em but duh day dey wuz bawn.[20] Deah wuz two brudduhs call July an Augus an deah two sons wuz name aftuh um. Some uh deze names go all duh way back tuh slabery time. Duh chillun jis name aftuh duh kin."

* *Thursday Jones, Brownville.*
** *John Blackshear, 625 Grapevine Avenue.*

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829 "Doze folks could fly too. Dey tell me deah's a lot ub um
789 wut wuz bring heah an dey ain much good. Duh massuh
567 wuz fixin tuh tie um up tuh whip um. Dey say, 'Massuh, yuh ain gwine lick me,' an wid dat dey runs down tuh duh ribbuh. Duh obuhseeuh he sho tought he ketch um wen dey git tuh duh ribbuh. But fo he could git tuh um, dey riz up in duh eah an fly way. Dey fly right back tuh Africa. I tink dat happen on Butler Ilun.

825 "I use tuh heah lots ub animal stories, but it bin so long I mos fuhgit bout um. I ain heah much bout duh spiduh cep he is bery wicked an he shahp. He kin spin he tread an riz right up in duh eah widout nuttn tuh hep um. He see a fly an begin tuh spin roun an roun um till he ketch um in he web. Den he caahn git way an An Nancy got um. Das wut duh chillun say tuh dis day wen dey see a spiduh ketch a fly —An Nancy got um.' "

346 On Sunday evening Julius drove us through black swamp and bush to the church at Silver Bluff (Plate XVIII).[A] The little white frame building with yellow light from oil lamps shining through the windows made the night suddenly come
794 alive. Negro men and boys were moving about outside in the darkness and a few were gathered on the steps. All the women and children were inside.

Escorted by Julius and a deacon we went into the church and took our places on the second from the front middle bench. The pulpit stood on the raised platform on which most of the light was concentrated. The men and boys came in. The church was filled with a tense quietness.

• 793 The preacher came from behind the platform and stood
794 silently behind the pulpit desk, looking dramatically over his congregation. He was tall and spare, with brown skin, narrow face, and a thin pointed beard, a Mohammedan look-
(292) ing Negro. He wore a black skull cap, which we learned later was not ritualistic but was worn to protect his head

A. [See Category 346, plate following p. xxxii-X--Analyst]

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from the draught. This was Preacher Little who, we were afterwards told, was an itinerant preacher, not a native to the island but a type native to the district.

His text, read in a loud, commanding voice, was "You ah the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its savory, wherewith shall it be salt; it is then no good and should be trompled intuh earth." The exposition of this pronouncement was awaited with breathless interest.

The sermon that followed, however, was in no way connected with the text. Preacher Little divided his sermon into three parts and lectured his congregation on "straying frum duh paat." What he said was not really coherent. Words stood out, phrases rang in our ears, quotations from the Bible resounded at random but that was the beginning and the end. The impelling element was the sound of Preacher Little's voice.

In each part he began slowly, quietly, persuading and reasoning with his congregation. His voice would carry a pleading question to them and they would answer, "Huh."[29] As he progressed, the quiet reasoning diminished; he shouted to his listeners. The "Huh—Huh's" became loud, guttural, vibrating grunts that echoed through the little building. Regular stamping of the feet began; the vibration penetrated into every corner. It was impossible not to think of the beating of the drum. The regular rhythmic, swelling noise was deafening. It meant agreement with Preacher Little. It urged him on to greater heights until his shouting voice not only seemed to fill the church but to reverberate from wall to wall. This climax was reached three times, at the end of each of the three parts of the sermon. Each time it seemed to act as a great emotional purge to the listeners and leave them happily exhausted.

When the sermon ended, spirituals were sung under the able direction of a young Negro named George Smith.* The

* *George Smith, Sapelo Island and Brunswick.*

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be for that of an elderly person who had acquired many friends and relatives over the years.

The Sea Island churches are the mainstay of the community and are always full of life, vigor, and energy. Many of them have long and illustrious histories. The Hebrew United Presbyterian Church on Johns Island, for example, was organized in 1868 after the white Presbyterian church no longer admitted blacks to worship at its services or in its building. The blacks held services in a bush tent until a new building could be put together out of lumber left on Seabrook and Kiawah beaches by a shipwreck. At the time the island could be reached only by boat, and according to the church historian, the organizing members gathered the wood, put it on a raft, and floated it to the construction site.

Brick Church, located on St. Helena Island, is a Baptist church with an even longer history. It was constructed by slaves for their masters in 1855. In 1862 the slaves, who had been permitted to worship in the balcony, took over the church when the white masters fled the island during the Civil War. Before Penn School (the first normal industrial and agricultural school for the education of blacks in South Carolina) was erected in 1864, the school's founder, Laura Towne, held classes in this church. An elegant two-story structure, Brick Church has been standing firm and serene for more than a century on the grounds of what is now Penn School Center.[53]

The Sea Island church services are lively and enthusiastic. At a good Baptist or African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Sunday morning service, the singing and praising will be audible for many miles. If there is a pianist, drummer, guitarist, or tambourinist, the service is even more energetic. The musical instruments are secondary, however, to the congregation's expressions of joy through handclapping, handshaking, and general rocking and swaying. It is literally impossible to attend these services and not be moved to participate actively. Even the smallest child attempts to move in time to the beat of the songs. The rhythm is also a very important part of the sermons. The minister uses many rhetorical devices to involve his congregation in the service, chief of which is the repetition of words and phrases at the beginning and end of each statement (see Chapter 3). The parishioners are mesmerized by the flow, rhythm, and steady recurrence of the repetitions, and their responses keep the service alive and active.

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Often the test of a good Sea Island minister is how well he can arouse and excite his parishioners. Most of the ministers are from the area and know well the rhetorical skills and techniques necessary to keep a congregation involved in the service. From the time when young children begin going to the church services, they learn that rhetorical skills are to be praised, practiced, and deeply venerated as essential characteristics of learned people. Learning, to the islanders, does not necessarily mean college education. Most of the Sea Island ministers have had no formal education at all, yet they could equal and surpass the most prolific expositors of the canons of rhetoric. For example, though this speaker has never heard of Cicero or studied the classical theories of rhetoric, note the unusual skill with which he makes his plea to the congregation, creating the long, flowing, masterfully constructed phrases characteristic of Ciceronian style:

Heavenly Father
Look at Reverend Pinckney one more time
Who is going to unfold the word of eternal truth
Want you to please, dear Jesus
Give him a silver trumpet
[So] he can coax and call some more ushers into this fold
And then, then, then, my Master
Look at the mistress of ceremonies
Jesus
Want you to plant her feet deep down in the soil, Master
Where she'll never be [up]rooted by the storm of life[54]

Often when a sermon is completed, the minister will begin to sing. It is essential for a Sea Island minister to be a good singer as well as a good speaker. Singing is a regular part of the islanders' daily lives. Many older people sing with fervor and passion as they work in their gardens or in the fields, even when they are alone. Singing is thought to be good for the body, the spirit, and the soul: it enlivens the spirit, which permeates the soul, giving it spiritual strength, and the soul in turn revitalizes the body with physical strength to carry on in times of despair or when physically exhausted. During the church services singing often stirs and excites an already "happy" congregation. When the music begins, some of the congregants throw up their hands, jerking and shaking their bodies in the movements of the shout. The music

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A Sermon

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For true, the Lord ben give em silver trumpet,
and he shonuf know how for blow em!

The Reverend Renty Pinckney is minister of New Jerusalem AME Church on Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina. His sermon is not presented in its entirety here, because it is very long. The Reverend Mr. Pinckney, like most island ministers, has memorized the Bible thoroughly; his creativity is revealed by his ability to join scattered allusions into a cohesive whole.[23]

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The Bread of Life

Rev. Renty Pinckney
New Jerusalem AME Church
Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina
July 1980

God is the Bread of Life
God will feed you when you get hungry *Oh yes! I know he will. All right! Yeah. Amen! Yes sir!*

Look on the mountain
Beside the hill of Galilee *My Lord!*

Watch his disciple
Riding on the sea *Yeah! Uh huh!*

Tossing by the wind and rain *Yeah. Come up*

Going over the sea of temptation *Uh hum*

Brother, I don't know
But I begin to think
In this Christian life *Yes!*

Sometime you gone be toss *Yes, yeah!*

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There is continuity, too, in the religious services. Worship is shared with others who appreciate the place of religious exercises in the traditional structure of beliefs and values. The services continue to be alive, energetic, and thoroughly enjoyable. Sermons and prayers are still passed on orally from one generation to the next, rather than written down. The sermons are delivered by ministers who are natives of the island area, who speak the language, and who value the old traditions.

Basketry and marketing remain important, for two reasons. They have economic significance, but pride has also become a factor. The children learning the basket traditions now are being told that the patterns they are weaving repeat not only the patterns woven by their grandparents but those of their African ancestors before them.

Fishing and netting continue to provide livelihoods for many, though they are endangered by development and pollution of the waters. The islanders are "river and ocean" people. They gauge their workdays by the sun and by the ebb and flow of the tides. Some continue to use the marsh mud to fertilize their gardens. Others go to the banks of the ocean recesses to sit, fish, and tell tales of Ber Rabbit, tales often so vivid that many of the children swear they have actually seen him bounding down the island paths. The fishing techniques and the love and respect for the ocean are being passed on to the children along with the tales, myths, lies, and legends of island life.

The folklore and literature of the Sea Islands, unsurprisingly, are more alive on the remote islands than on the more commercialized ones. Though television, with its cartoon characters and talking pictures, is an arch rival for even the most gifted teller, on stormy days and dark, gloomy nights no one is permitted to watch television because the islanders believe that it draws electricity and increases the possibility that their homes could be struck by lightning. During these times the children are gathered and told tales of Ber Rabbit, hants, ghosts, witches, and hags, and no television program can hold an audience as spellbound as some of the island storytellers.

Guliah, the island language, is being affected by population changes, television, and the schools. Children are seldom named after days of the week any more, but most are still given two names: one to use at school and one to use at home. Many of the words familiar to the older generations are not being passed on to the children because the islanders, like most parents, want their children to attain good educa-

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Chapter 3

1. The prayers are often presented in a chanting style difficult for non-Gullah speakers to understand. Thus I gratefully acknowledge the aid of Mrs. Ida Morris-Hamilton of Wadmalaw Island for helping with transcriptions and translations.

2. See Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy;* Harold Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1976); William H. Pipes, *Say Amen Brother* (New York: William Federal Press, 1951); and Jones-Jackson, "Oral Tradition."

3. The prayers are normally accompanied by music. If no musical accompanist is available, the prayer giver and the congregation create their own musical accompaniment with handclaps, shuffles, and moans.

4. See Carter, *Prayer Tradition;* Pipes, *Say Amen Brother;* and Molefe Asante, *African and African-American Communication Continuities* (New York: Council of International Studies, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1975).

5. This prayer was delivered impromptu by Mr. James Brown, who is known for his ability to deliver stirring words with absolutely no prior preparation. I am grateful to him and Rev. Renty Pinckney for permitting me to record this prayer during church services. I am likewise grateful to Rev. Chester R. Jones for his comments on my analysis of the prayer. I owe special thanks to Rev. Alfred Owens of Greater Mt. Calvary Holy Church, Washington, D.C., for his invaluable assistance in providing references for the many biblical allusions in the prayer. All references are to the King James Version.

6. Ps. 51, David's cry for repentance and mercy, may have been a model for this passage.

7. Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58.

8. Rom. 6:12, 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:53–54; John 15:1.

9. Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5.

10. John 1:32.

11. Phil. 3:13.

12. Ps. 1:14.

13. John 12:2, 25:4.

14. 2 Cor. 7:5.

15. The speaker adapts his prayer to fit the occasion by including the purpose for which he is offering his prayer in strategic places. Many of the following passages are based on the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes; the speaker brings them into his prayer as responses (e.g., "Want my spirit meek and mild").

16. The minister is often considered the assembler and leader of the community as well as of the church. Thus, like Moses, he is viewed as a deliverer of the people, one chosen by God to be the inheritor of the silver trumpet. See Num. 10:1–10.

17. This is a rural expression of the idea from Matt. 7:24–29 that whosoever builds his house on solid rock shall not be moved by the storms of life.

18. Jerusalem is not only the holy biblical city but, literally, the name of the AME church in which this prayer was delivered.

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oped through African cultural convergence. Their pattern of speech was one example of this. "Their language," wrote one missionary in 1840, "though . . . understood by themselves, cannot be by one unaccustomed to them, without great study and application." It was a peculiar creation—an English patois. As previously discussed, Lorenzo Dow Turner's linguistic study of Gullah, conducted over a fifteen-year period, involved many former slave informants. He views Gullah as a creolized form of English with elements of survivals from African languages spoken by ethnic groups brought to South Carolina and Georgia. Turner found most retentions present in vocabulary but also in elements of sound, syntax, morphology, intonation, and word formation. Yet as previously mentioned, Gullah was even more than a distinct pidgin English or dialect, but a means of expressing oneself in the most graphic and sometimes literal sense. Arthur Sumner, a Northern teacher on the Sea Islands during the Civil War, found it "easier to understand a foreign language":

> 'Talk we get dinner,' means 'do you mean that I shall get dinner?'
>
> Byron came to me this morning with a message from his mother.—'Ma says, if you give her some trade. . . .' Can you make it out? Oh, dull girl! The meaning is clear. Ma wants to know if you will give her some thread.[48]

William F. Allen, another Northern teacher, also wrote about the Gullah's peculiar interpretations and usage of English. For instance, "stand," referred to the state or condition of a person, place or thing. On one occasion, Allen, teaching sentence structure to a class of children, had them go over to the window and then asked them the color of the sky. "Nobody could tell," and most of them "stared straight ahead at Jimmy, who was in the yard, and I half expected them to say 'black.' " Finally "Abraham" ventured "white," then "red." Dick, a former house man, passed by the window and Allen expressed his frustration, to which Dick replied promply, " 'lick'em":

> "Well Dick," said I, here's a chance for you to lick Tom, who was appearing around a corner of the barn. "Tom, what's the color of the sky?" Tom stared at the sky, but said nothing. Dick grinned. "Tom, how sky *stan*'?" "Blue" shouted Tom.[49]

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Missionaries categorized black spirituality as "curious superstitions" or as types of worship reminiscent of Catholicism. Gullahs had their own religious leaders who sometimes professed Christianity and solicited

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sanction from planters and overseers as the "spiritual elders" of the people. One St. Helena planter who spent little time on the island, wrote to the Methodist missionary assigned there in 1833 that he hoped the Methodists could improve the religious condition among the Gullahs. The biggest problem according to the planters was the black leaders whose control had to be broken.[50]

Thus missionaries vied with black spiritual advisers for religious leadership in the slave community.[51] There was no way for the Methodists to counter the influence of slaves whom the Gullahs regarded as spiritual advisers but who made no claim to Christianity. Methodists felt that under Christian instruction customs and practices perpetrated by this leadership would die out in time. But the missionaries believed black leaders who fused "paganism" with Christianity were most detrimental to the Methodist cause. These leaders had either to be set on the "true" path or their influence undermined. The competition proved difficult. Everywhere they went among the Gullahs, missionaries found black leaders successfully impeding Methodist influence. From Beaufort Mission, T. E. Ledbetter reported in 1836 that although some "pious" Episcopalian planters allowed missionaries to preach to slaves, he saw no evidence of progress:

> . . . we combat a great many falso notions, and . . . fatal doctrines which have been elderly imbibed by the colored population through the instrumentality of ignorant and superstitious teachers among themselves. And nothing is more difficult to overcome than a strongly prejudiced understanding . . . many among them are opposed to us.[52]

Some missionaries, even without planter approval, attempted completely to halt black spiritual leadership. Others hoped to communicate with Gullahs by recognizing or even appointing certain "elders." Both tactics often bred frustration. From Pocotaligo Mission in Beaufort District, John N. Davies reported in 1840:

> A black man, one of them [the slaves] whom they claim for their spiritual father, and, as they say, "had brought them through the spirit," became corrupted and inflated with self-importance—I gave him a close talk, with a design of moving him, when he held up the wand of his sweeping influence by asserting that all the children [the people] would follow him. As we have no authority to visit them at the plantation we chose the only mode of saving them, . . . to select and appoint a zealous and upright man, of their number to be with him as an aid and guard; meanwhile a noise came from abroad of large depredations being

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committed which implicated this and several plantations . . . nearly all have ceased to attend and we fear they are rushing to ruin—Lord have mercy upon them and upon me."[33]

This missionary's report typifies one significant aspect of white attempts to usurp black leadership — that of replacing an individual who could not be subordinated with one seemingly more controllable. Undoubtedly, the "zealous and upright" man was more cooperative than pious. The audacious missionary had no access to the plantation where his spiritual rival lived, nor apparently did he have the good wishes and confidence of the planter. Some planters left it completely up to the Gullahs as to whether or not they attended missionary services, and others specifically forbade it; this contributed to the continued presence and influence of black leaders. Moreover, as the Davies' account reveals, slaves given passes to attend preaching appointments often found other more lucrative or entertaining means of utilizing their temporary mobility. Fear of this limited movement and assembly was a continual obstruction in obtaining unified support for religious instruction from the slaveholders. When Christian conversion took on a new seriousness in 1845, large slave gatherings for religious purposes, never popular, were discontinued and the emphasis shifted to individual and family instruction on plantations. The latter type of religious teaching eventually brought the Methodists more success.[34]

Still many Gullahs displayed skepticism toward the Methodists and resisted offending their own leaders. From Pocotaligo, John N. Davies continued to inform the public of his problems:

> We have had some trouble at another preaching place, occasioned by the puffing up of father S., as he is called, but plantation authority forbids his guiding the people. They have appeared spellbound, not to move or think without him. He a poor creature of dust imagines himself to be the Great Shepherd whose voice alone "the sheep know," and whom alone the true sheep will follow. . . . We visit the plantations and explain as far as possible. God grant us brighter days and better times.

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But despite only marginal encouragement from both planters and slaves, the missionaries continued to "suffer and rejoice and pray and labor." And from the beginning, though suspicious and cautious, some slaves came to hear the missionaries by choice. The fact of their attendance was considered progress as expressed by one optimistic missionary in 1835:

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175 581 586 appointment," wrote Botume. "Sometimes two men claimed the same woman, whilst she coquetted not a little, evidently disposed to take the one that bid the highest." But, Botume added that this "rarely if ever" occurred when children were involved.[74]

175 795 797 Although the Committee on Discipline within Baptist churches operated as a religious tribunal, efforts to use Christianity to control the Gullahs was largely unsuccessful. Nevertheless, Gullahs seemed almost unanimously to prefer religious affiliation through Baptist membership rather than Methodist. Methodist missionaries displayed a more sincere and human interest in the slaves than their sometimes ruthless, Puritan-oriented Baptist masters. "This seems to be a very unpromising portion of our field of labor," wrote one Methodist missionary, "all owing to the prejudices of the negroes." He continued:

> We cannot . . . find fault with the negroes in this portion of our mission field, for preferring another communion to our own; but our voice will ever be lifted against them, for refusing the bread of life, because, forsooth it comes not to them on a silver salver, or from the hands of one who has not "gone down into or come up out of the water."[75]

The cermonious manner in which Baptists initiated converts into church fellowship impressed the Gullahs. Also, despite Calvinist orientation, Baptists were nonheirarchial, worship was less formal, and church structure less legalistic. But, such considerations were not as significant in influencing Gullah acceptance of the Baptist denomination as were other factors. Baptists slaves exercised a religious autonomy the Methodists would not hear of, and this, coupled with the fact that Sea Island slavery was a quasi-absentee type, contributed to the Gullahs' opportunity to control their own religion, to a point. Moreover, in their endeavor to keep blacks under civil control and to keep them on the plantations, slaveholders allowed spiritual permissiveness by legitimizing already existing black societies and leaving them in the hands of black leaders with only minimal white supervision.[76]

175 • 793 [554] [797] The extent to which spiritual autonomy influenced Gullah culture and social organization is most evident in the prominence of black leadership. Baptist planters recommended black watchmen who were supposedly "tried and true," and slaveholders apparently had great confidence in those chosen. Such elders were usually staunch church members, but also influential and respected in the quarters. Methodist missionaries were skep-

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tical about employing blacks even as helpers. William Capers insisted that "helpers" only be "a feeble staff—not leaned upon. They can no more do the missionary's work than a staff can walk." On the other hand, Sea Island Baptists placed much Christian teaching on the shoulders of black leaders. Methodists were consistently confronted with the problems created by this difference in tactical approach. After 1845 most black elders operated with the approval of slaveholders. Some, according to Methodists, had rudimentary knowledge of Christianity. But most, said the missionaries, represented "the very essence of ignorance and superstition." Some slaves came to Methodists' preaching and "precious seasons" and "effusions of tears would ensue." But Methodists lamented that slaves immediately deserted them for "one of their own":

> Let it be known that one of these [slaves] is to preach on such a day and there is such a rush . . . that they may have the pleasure of hearing one of their own color . . . what else than mischief can be expected from the teaching of an ignorant enthusiast who knows nothing of God's word, and puts his own delusions in the place of divine truth? . . . and they say that whenever they come to hear me, it is from duty . . . because I am employed by their owners."

Wherever Baptists authorized Christian instruction, Methodists found black leaders and black societies. "The society exerts its influence against us which is remarkably strong," wrote the missionary at Pocotaligo in 1844. "This 'society' is altogether in the hands of the colored people who are actively engaged against us." Thus black leaders struggled to maintain their position among their people and continued preaching and practicing their own version of "Christianity." Methodists hoped the establishment of missions would fragment the influence of black teachers and thus foster the cause of "true" religion. A lengthy editorial was printed in the *Southern Christian Advocate* in 1846 where the author discussed the "deplorable exhibition of pseudo religion" among slaves of the large plantations in coastal South Carolina:

> The superstitious notions prevalent here and there, are probably the reflects of—more ancient superstitions, handed down by tradition and propagated by so called *leaders*, who prior to the preaching of the gospel by . . . the missionaries . . . wielded a fearful amount of spiritual influence among their followers, and the negro communities of the plantations generally. And it is what with remarkable tenacity these superstitious actions still maintain their hold in spite of a better teaching. Instead of giving up their visionary religiónism, embracing the simple truth . . . our missionaries find them endeavoring to incorporate their

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superstitious rites with a purer system of instruction, producing thereby a hybrid, crude, and undefinable medley of truth and falsehood.[78]

Many missionaries saw slave children as the future of the enterprise. Others were even skeptical about that. According to one Methodist, "so far does prejudice extend, even the children on some of these places refuse to be instructed, because of the example of their parents and the older ones." Many Baptist planters left instruction of the young in the hands of plantation "help" who taught the children prayers and whatever else their religious instruction consisted of. Gradually, Methodists were forced to admit that despite their consistent though infrequent preaching and catechizing, they could not successfully compete with black leadership operating clandestinely or with the approval of Baptist churches and slaveholders.[79]

The Episcopalian mission established in 1849 on the Sea Isalands took away the near monopoly that Methodist missionaries previously had among a number of Episcopalian planters. Episcopalian slaveholders observed the same uninterested attitude among the slaves as Methodists witnessed. John Edwin Fripp, a St. Helena Episcopalian, allowed his slaves to attend the preaching of a diocese missionary while Fripp himself was in residence on the plantation. But given a choice, few showed up to hear "Mr. Welch" when the minister was on the plantation. According to Fripp's Journal:

> Sat. Dec. 19th—Rev. Welch is down tonight lecturing to the Negroes. Will go to Seabrooks in the Morning. The Negroes appear very backward in coming to hear him. They are getting tired of religion I expect.

No doubt "religion" was not what tired Fripp's slaves, but the dry "lecturing" which often characterized missionary sermons. Gullahs realized that planters were not truly concerned with their spiritual welfare and the they recognized the one-sidedness of their situation. An old coachman on the same Fripp plantation stated "massa been unjust to we. Take all we labor and get rich, then say we lazy, Can't care for we self, give us two suits a year, dat our wages."[80] No one need wonder about the degree of enthusiasm Gullahs had for the religious emissary of such masters.

Thus, a key to understanding the appeal of the Baptist faith for Gullahs lies in recognizing the slaves' rationale. Methodist emphasis on order and hierarchy left little room for internal flexibility in the denomina-

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Sam Polite, the Praise House elder. From the Penn Historical Collection. (Permission granted by Penn Community Services, Inc., St. Helena Island, South Carolina.)

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CHAPTER 8

Elements of the Head and the Heart: Gullah Interpretations of Christianity

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Do not pass we by, My Jesus, as you go on de road from Jericho to de new Jerusalem, but tarry at de door and speak de word of hope to we heart and blow de breeze of blessing upon us. Almighty and eternal Father, we de prisoners of Hope, turn to de stronghold and begs oona (you) fur give we de long look and de over-coming patience dat we could have 'couragement fur go forward and see de truth dat will make us free. Do God, if it so please you, Massa Jesus, Gib me de long look like Moses, so I could see into de Promised Land from de mount, if my weary feet ain't neber guine to walk in de New Jerusalem with my people. . . .*

"Let me lib wid de musket in one hand an' de Bible in de oder,—dat if I die at de muzzel ob de musket, die in de water, die on de land. I may know I hab de bressed Jesus in my hand, an' hab no fear."
"I hab lef' my wife in de land o' bondage; my little ones dey say eb'ry night, whar is my fader? But when I die, when de bressed mornin' rises, when I shall stan' in de glory, wid one foot on de water an' one foot on de land, den, O Lord, I shall see my wife and' my little chil'en once more."**

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Sam Polite lived to become senior elder on the Benjamin Fripp plantation. Polite did not know his age, but had "ben a man fore 'gun shoot'" (Battle of Port Royal, November 1861), and became the most respected and sagacious elder on St. Helena Island. Those who knew and observed

*Prayer of Sam Polite, "The Long Look," n.d., misc. corr., Penn School Papers, SHC.
**Gullah soldier's prayer, in Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (New York: Collier Books, 1962, repr. from 1870 ed.), 48.

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him for many years insisted that his "wisdom" and "vision" were "God's free gift" for a service of faith and hope that "Prophet" Polite had rendered his people. In old age, as a free man, he addressed the Praise House congregation probably the same way he did on other occasions throughout the years after slavery. The words of Sam Polite demonstrates that the Gullahs, in freedom as in bondage, viewed their religion as a special gift with a unique essence:

> God done gib de white folks a heap of things, but he ain't forgotten us 'cause He gib us Religion and we have a right to show it out to all de world. De Buckra [white people], deys got de knowing of the whys and hows of religion, but dey ain't never got de feel of it yet. I think God ain't have much respect for no kind of religion without de feeling. De Book say, 'They that worship me must worship me in spirit and in truth.' There might be some truth in deys-all religion, but there ain't much spirit in a religion that's all in de head.[1]

The Gullahs' capacity to maintain psychological and spiritual autonomy in the face of degrading implications of their historical circumstances was usually attributed to their faith. The ostensible basis of this faith was Christianity. Certainly one source of Gullah religion and spirituality is found in Christian example, enabling them to see their enslavement in heroic terms. Yet Gullah roots sprang from an African world view that emphasized affirmation and celebration of human life, with religion representing the highest expression of that existence. Additionally, their African heritage familiarized Gullahs with the power and supremacy of a collective spirit over individual experience. Thus, while planters valued religious instruction as a means of manipulating the actions and thinking of Gullahs, the slaves' discretionary adoption and adaptation of certain features of Christianity was a way of articulating and manifesting their common oppression in terms significant for them and also either acceptable or esoteric to slaveholders and missionaries.

Most Gullahs cared little about didactic features fundamental to Christianity. And while their exposure to the religion was primarily superficial, their acceptance and reinterpretation was essentially practical, reinforcing older traditions. Their limited understanding of Protestantism was observed by antebellum travelers and Methodist missionaries right up to the time of civil conflict. Aptitude had nothing to do with the Gullahs' failure to grasp a firmer knowledge of Protestantism. They shrewdly did what was expected of them without actually internalizing

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on the plantation, seated on the box containing his dead body, and as the body was lowered into the grave, she was seized by a frenzied mob, forced into the open pit and every effort was made to bury her alive. These efforts nearly succeeded. But wiser counsels prevailed and she was at last released.[12]

In this situation moral judgment within the slave community was not in keeping with the Christian doctrine of forgiveness that usually characterized the Gullahs' disposition. Instead, it indicates how African influences continued. Apparently, Gullahs believed that some violations should not be summarily dismissed or forgiven. Among the Windward Coast peoples, no concept of sin seems to have been present. Yet among some, the Mende for example, there was a sense of guilt in two areas of government—breaches in communal laws and regulations, and violation of the rights of those unable to help themselves. The BaKongo considered sin to be a wrong against society, not God, and thus should be punished by society. The above Gullah crime could be viewed as betrayal of communal trust, an individual violation, and as an immoral act against the people as a whole. Such violations called for punishment, not only for the offender, but for those closely related to the act.[13] Such irrevocable behavior among the bondspeople could possibly undermine their collective strength and organization, and no doubt Gullahs felt that depravity should be rooted out in a drastic manner as a warning to others who might be driven to commit such violence. Yet the fact that the example was an atypical incident demonstrates that adoption of a common socioreligious connection among Gullahs had more of a restraining effect on deviant social behavior than threat of violent retaliation.

In the Gullah slave community the most important people were religious leaders, comprising two groups. One consisted of black elders, and the others were spiritual parents, or the black elders' "help." Black elders were chosen by whites, often by Baptist planters. These black leaders, referred to as "deacons" or "watchmen" were responsible for "watchcare" of members of the plantation societies. They were the experienced church members in the quarters, having some knowledge of Christianity and probably taking their religion more literally and seriously than their fellow bondspeople. Black elders maintained relatively close contact with the Baptist churches during the last thirty years of bondage, and were exemplary people, managing to walk a thin line between securing the trust and confidence of both masters and slaves.[14] Undoubtedly, to the slaveholders black elders embodied those features of Christianity which,

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they hoped, would encourage obedience, docility, humility, and a "turn-the-other-cheek" attitude. The elders' judgment was important to planters, who realized the influence these leaders exercised. Masters probably depended upon the reasoning power of elders, expecting them to use Christianity as a soothing influence in the slave quarters. Although law forbade black religious gatherings without three slaveholders being present, this edict was grossly violated in the Lowcountry, as probably elsewhere, and black societies were rarely visited by whites supposedly superintending black worship.

Thus, black elders' duties of oversight, direction, watchcare, and advice were extensive. Since they ultimately had the last word on whether or not the "Christian" character of a "seeker" of religion warranted that individual's being accepted into "de Ark ob Safety," the supremacy of these leaders was considerable.[15] Yet black elders undoubtedly used their position of power with measure, fairness, and to benefit of the slave community, for they always maintained respect among the bondspeople. Their message was one of encouragement and their capacity to inspire moral confidence largely depended upon their verbal ability, gravity of deportment, and consistent record of honesty and correctness. As guardians of the community and articulators of group values, they may have counseled patience and been the main proponents of the Christian attitude of "resignation," which observers attributed to some Gullahs, as a form of protection. Above all, black elders were firm about depredations within the slave quarters, watching closely "to detect some delinquency" or "any shortcomings," yet ready to forgive an errant member.

> They visit, pray with and exhort the sick, rebuke the impenitent, counsel the weak, conduct social meetings for prayer, whenever such meetings are permitted by the proprietor of a plantation, and especially have vigilant watch over the young, striving to keep them in the path of rectitude.[16]

The other group of religious leaders, spiritual fathers and mothers, were not white-sanctioned leaders of the Praise House, but among the Gullahs they were recognized as legitimate and reportedly had "the most absolute authority over them." They were a continuous foil to Methodist missionaries and often disliked by planters because these religious leaders successfully incorporated non-Christian elements into white Protestantism. From this group came Praise House leaders and the "committee' that acted as the religious court. Thus on an individual plantation, the

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"help" who held Praise House membership, conducted religious services, and oversaw local religious activity was actually more significant than the black elder who might oversee several plantations. Like the elders, spiritual leaders were loved, respected, and faithful in those things pertaining to the welfare of the religious community. The spiritual leaders' influence belonged to a tradition older than the black elders' role.[17] They undoubtedly adjusted to Christianity by making a place for themselves in the heart of it as practiced by Gullahs. Also Baptist elders, though having the interests of the community at heart, may have imbibed too much of the new religion and been too willing to preach and teach conservatism. Thus for the Gullahs, the power of and respect for plantation spiritual parents exceeded that of Baptist-sanctioned elders. The former were healers, interpreters of dreams, signs, and visions, all of which were central to Gullah conceptions of religion and infused with their impressionistic form of Christianity.[18] The functions of the two types of religious leaders may have overlapped to some degree and also complemented each other. They represent different aspects of the Gullahs' spiritual existence—one Christian, the other African—and an element of syncretism within slave religion.

Examination of Gullah methods of admission to church membership is one key to understanding the significance of the spiritual leader's role, Gullah socioreligious spiritualism, and links with a West African past. A candidate's acceptance into the church and subsequently into the Praise House depended upon relating a satisfactory experience, which was the result of a soul-grappling, traumatic confrontation between the individual and a higher power, culminating, if successful, in a sensation of rebirth and full membership in the religious community. The period of transition between the time a desire to become a Christian was expressed and the acceptance by elders of the religious experience was called "seekin'."

The name, "seekin'" was introduced to the Gullahs by Methodist missionaries. At meetings with slaves, after preaching and teaching, the Methodists would then inquire if anyone would like to come forward and "seek Jesus." Those who professed such a desire would then go "on trial" and remain in this limbo status until the missionary deemed them ready for baptism. Probationers, or "seekers of religion," were required by Methodists to know the Creed, Sacraments, and Lord's Prayer, and they were "not eligible for baptism until they had learned them under-

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in their offspring, sparing no expense in efforts to make the neophytes as radiant as possible. After initiates were dressed in their new finery, they gathered in the meetinghouse with friends and family, "where in a public ceremony they are handed over to their parents with great acclamation."[30]

Among Gullahs, a "seeker" related an acceptable experience to the spiritual leader and declared a profession of faith to the Praise House members. At an appointed time, the church elder and his "help" would then further examine the individual to determine readiness for baptism. Laura Towne witnessed such a prebaptismal examination on St. Helena:

> . . . father Tom and his bench of elders examined candidates for baptism and asked Ellen to record their names. Each candidate clad in the oldest, dirtiest clothes, with a cloth band round their forehead stood humbly before the bench. Father Tom, looking like Jupiter, grave, powerful and awfully dignified put the most posing questions to which the candidates replied meekly but promptly. They asked the satisfactory candidate at last, "how do you pray." Then the soft, musical voice made the coaxing, entreating kind of prayer which they use so much, and a nod dismissed the applicant. Another was called up at once. There were seventy to be examined.[31]

Following examination, the candidates were ready for their water burial, which took place on communion Sunday morning. Teacher David Thorpe wrote of one occasion in 1863 when "upwards of one hundred and forty people," of all ages, were baptized. It was for him a "strange and picturesque scene." The people gathered from "far and near," in all manner of vehicles and "in every kind of attire." The candidates arrived "dressed for the water," according to Thorpe, "in miserable looking clothing," with their heads tied up in handkerchiefs. Nearby, among the bushes were mule carts loaded with garments for the converts to put on after the baptism. The white minister, Mr. Phillips, read off each candidate's name, and "Old Pa Tom" nodded his approval of their examination. All headed down to the water:

> The ceremony was performed by the roadside near a bridge where the road crossed the creek. "Siah" "leader" at "Good William Fripp's" took the arm of Mr. Phillips and together they entered the water. Around on every side were hundreds of people arrayed in their Sunday best. Their shiny black faces surmounted by bright turbans and white turbans. . . . They presented a beautiful sight today. Truly the sun shone out on a beautiful scene. . . . On the bridge in the crowd a few eager white faces could be seen peeping out, while on the grove near the water were other white friends . . .—near the water stood a large

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band of singers and they sent up hymn after hymn during the exercises. Mr. Phillips and Siah went into the water. The Pastor extended his hands and his whole flock of candidates went forward into the water. Each one seemed to be attended by several friends or relatives, who besides being bodily support carried dry clothing, shawls, cloaks and overcoats. . . . They all gathered about the minister and Siah. Mr. Phillips took them in turn—each by one shoulder while Siah laid hold of the other and together they immersed them, over one hundred and forty. As fast as they had been baptized they stepped to the shore, though before they reached there, their friends received them and shuffled them up . . . and hurried them off into the bushes. It took a long time to get through with so many, but after a while it was over and we all went back to church. All the candidates came out in shiny robes. . . . There was a great difference in their looks when they came into the church the second time. Then we had a long service after which the right hand of fellowship was given and . . . the sacrament was administered to them.[32]

Resemblance is noted between the African secret society candidates' "turning out" and the Gullahs' "baptizin'." Both situations represented the emergence of a new individual whose status as a full member of the community was illustrated by a water burial. This new position was not only expressed by immersion but by the wearing of new garments and partaking of a communion service with family, friends, and, in the case of Gullahs, only "true believers" of the Baptist faith. In both instances the event was as impressive as it was significant. Like the new Christians, African initiates returning from the bush were considered "newborns from the belly of the Devil." All claims against them were forgiven and they were not responsible for any contract or behavior displayed prior to being devoured by the devil and reemerging as new beings.[33]

No ceremony symbolized an individual's initiation into the church and community more than baptism. For Gullahs, this had to be total immersion. Even those salves who joined the Methodist church usually insisted on total immersion rather than "mere sprinkling." Perhaps this preference was a latent memory of secret society initiation, with total immersion representing absolute commitment to the Gullahs' socioreligious culture. It is also possible that, as some Methodist missionaries believed, Gullahs were confident that "baptism by total immersion is a means of a present, full and eternal salvation; and that after you have been baptized, it is impossible to sin or fall from grace."[34] Yet the most significant feature of the Gullahs' attachment to total immersion may have been that this black community interpreted performance of the rite as symbolically

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in the slave quarters, this did not imply total acceptance of a Judeo-Christian concept of reality. The Gullahs broadened the meaning of Christianity, organizing and integrating it into past beliefs and practices. Two traditions formed the basis of the Gullahs' struggle against slavery. The example of Christ allowed them to take a superior attitude toward their oppressors. But they also exerted spiritual and psychological autonomy by clinging to Africanity. In their isolation, the Gullahs remained an uprooted people whose acceptance of Christianity was sometimes outward, selective, and subject to reinterpretations which would not force them to relinquish old ways entirely. Of course, African beliefs, where these remained, accommodated the slave situation just as Christianity, to some extent, accommodated African religion and philosophy. Where Protestantism did not tolerate Africanity as a separate expression, Africanisms sometimes continued through secretiveness or by finding a place at the center of Protestantism as practiced by the slaves.

As Lawrence Levine notes, freedom placed the slaves in a culturally marginal situation, and weakened their "cultural self-containment." No longer were values and cultural standards determined from within the group. African-Americans found themselves in a bicultural situation, absorbing elements of the dominant society in order to obtain recognition and privileges. Perhaps at the moment of freedom the period of accommodation began as a significant factor in black life. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the organization of the black church. This point may be most easily illustrated by the motif of the gospel songs and their otherworldly context, whereas the slave spirituals were full of camouflaged prayers for freedom. As Levine points out, the period after bondage reflects a changing consciousness.[3] Slave religion bred radicalism in the early years, and progressivism later. The institutionalized black church, formed after freedom, was far more powerful and independent, but often counseled conservatism.

Sam Polite lived long past bondage. He was over one hundred years old when he prayed the prayer of "The Long Look." He had grown up in slavery, lived through emancipation, reconstruction, restoration, and into the twentieth century of segregation. Still he prayed the prayer of hope. Still he asked for a sign—a look at the future for his people. Polite's prayer implied what history has revealed—that the "New Jerusalem" evaded the African-Americans after freedom. The emancipation experience, born of hope and optimism, brought a new kind of bondage.

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Greenwood Press, 1973; repr. of 1940 ed.), xviii–xix. Civil War missionaries reported seeing Africans in the Sea Islands. Towne Diary, 12, reads: "I saw at church from Gabriel Eddings plantation a woman brought from Africa. Her face was tatooed. She seemed of a more vigorous stock"; Harriett Ware, related an account of her meeting a black steward from the *Wabash* in Port Royal. He had just returned from Africa where a slave ship *Ariel* and its slave-pirate were taken. "He gave us a most interesting account of the whole affair, as he went on board with the Captain when he ordered the hatches to be opened and the nine hundred blacks were discovered." Pearson, *Port Royal*, 225.

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48. *SCA*, May 1, 1840; Lorenzo D. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969; repr. from 1949 ed.), 5, 151; Arthur Sumner to Nina Hartshorn, May 18, 1862, Penn School Papers, v. 4, SHC; David Thorpe to John Mooney, January 25, 1863, Dabbs Papers, Thorpe Series, SHC.

49. Allen Diary, passim and 139.

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50. *CAJ*, January 31, 1834; Federal Writers Program, *Drums and Shadows*, Chapter 6; ield to Moore, March 21, 1833, HSSCC.

51. *CAJ*, January 31, 1834, November 20, 1835, January 22, 1836.

52. *CAJ*, July 22, 1836.

53. Ibid., June 26, 1835; *SCA*, June 26, 1840, June 26, 1843.

54. *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 48–49.

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55. *SCA*, June 26, 1840; *CAJ*, July 17, 1835.

56. John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972 ed.), 72; Crum, *Gullah*, 189; Kemble, *Journal*, 58; *CAJ*, February 7, 1834, April 25, 1834, September 25, 1835, July 22, 1836; *SCA*, May 24, 1839, June 30, 1843, September 29, 1843.

57. William Capers, *A Catechism for the Use of the Methodist Mission* (Charleston: J. S. Burges, 1833), passim; *SCA*, January 31, 1851.

58. Andrew, "Slave Population," 317–18; "Report of the Missionary Society," *Minutes of South Carolina Conference*, February 10, 1836, 20, HSSCC; *SCA*, January 26, 1838, June 30, 1843; Charles C. Jones, *Suggestions on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the Southern States* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1847), 14; Wightman, *Life of Capers*, 295–96. Quoted in John Spencer Bassett, *The Southern Plantation Overseer, as Revealed in His Letters* (Northhampton, Mass: Smith College, 1925), 14–15.

59. John Bunch to Missionary Society, South Carolina Conference, January 11, 1835, HSSCC; Pinckney to Capers, January 24, 1835, HSSCC; *CAJ*, April 10, 1833, September 9, 1833, January 24, 1835, June 26, 1835, July 22, 1836; *SCA*, December 22, 1843, February 23, 1847; Wightman, *Life of Capers*, 298–99.

60. Bunch to Missionary Society, January 11, 1835, HSSCC; *CAJ*, February 7, 1834, June 13, 1834, October 17, 1834, June 26, 1835; *SCA*, April 8, 1842. January 29, 1847, May 6, 1848, March 28, 1851; Crum, *Gullah*, 218.

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61. *SCA*, July 7, 1843.

62. Ibid.

63. *SCA*, July 14, 1843, September 15, 1843, September 29, 1843, August 13, 1847, May 18, 1849, September 6, 1850, May 25, 1855.

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64. John McKim to Mrs. Wendell Garrison, April 20, 1864. Antislavery Papers, Rare Book Room, Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y. The most well-known individual who argues that Gullah music came from Methodist hymns is Guy B. Johnson, *Folk Culture on St. Helena Island* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), ix–xi, 6–8, 74–84; Albert Deems Betts, *History of South Carolina Methodism* (Columbia: Advocate Press, 1952), 159–68. Betts provides a history of the camp meetings in South Carolina and lists

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74. Forten, "Sea Islands," Part I, 594; Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 157–58.

75. *CAJ*, August 18, 1837; *SCA*, July 7, 1843, August 21, 1840, February 3, 1841, September 29, 1843.

76. As far as total immersion was concerned, Methodist missionaries were willing to baptize slaves in this manner if the slaves so desired. *CAJ*, February 7, 1834; John L. Field to George W. Moore, March 21, 1833 HSSCC; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, passim, BC; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, II (2) 184–85; III (3) 202.

77. Towne Diary, 26, 54; Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal*, 26–28; *CAJ*, January 31, 1834, November 20, 1835, July 22, 1836; *SCA*, May 1, 1840, April 8, 1842, June 26, 1843, July 28, 1843.

78. *SCA*, February 16, 1844, October 30, 1846.

79. *SCA*, July 28, 1843; *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 29–50; Russell, *My Diary*, 77; James R. Stuart Recollections, n.d. (around 1850), SHC; *SCA*, March 30, 1849, May 12, 1849, September 6, 1850, July 5, 1855.

80. *SCA*, May 18, 1849; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 145–47; Fripp Diary, 9, 18, 40, 47, Towne Diary, 22.

8. Elements of the Head and the Heart: Gullah Interpretations of Christianity

1. "The Long Look," 2–3, undated sketch of a former slave, Sam Polite, who lived to be over 100 years old, Penn School Papers, vol. 1, SHC. For discussions on the Union victory at Port Royal see Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 3–12; Theodore Rosengarten, *Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter, Journal of Thomas B. Chaplin, 1812–1890* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 202–22.

2. Randall Hunt, "Journal of a Traveller from Charleston, S. C. to New Haven, Conn., 1832," SCHS; "South Carolina through New England Eyes, Elmira Coffin's Visit to the Low Country in 1851," SCHS; William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, ed. Fletcher Pratt (New York: Harper Brothers, 1854), Charles Joyner, *Down By the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 154–59, 161–63, 229–30; "All Saints, Waccamaw, the Parish, the Place, the People, 1739–1948," Beaufort Township Library, South Carolina, Society of Colonial Dames of America, 22–24, 30–33, 38–43. Joyner's book is a reconstruction of black life in All Saints Parish.

3. W. T. Richardson to Rev. S. S. Jocelyn, June 19, 1863, Lydia Fuller to Rev. S. S. Jocelyn, July 5, 1864, AMA; Diary of William F. Allen in William F. Allen Family Papers, 1775–1937, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 144; Elizabeth Hyde Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1968; repr. from 1893 ed.), 91–92, 112–14.

4. Edward L. Pierce, "The Freedom at Port Royal," *Atlantic Monthly*, 12 (September, 1863): 304; Laura M. Towne to James McKim, February 1, 1862, Antislavery Papers, Rare Book Room, Cornell University; Allen Diary, 96, 127–28, 151–52.

5. Mary Ames, *From a New England Woman's Diary in Dixie* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969; repr. from 1906 ed.), 68; Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 74–75.

6. Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 43; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 320–21; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (New York: Collier Books, 1962, repr. from 1870 ed.), 49; Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*,

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15. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, May 14, 1842, 34, BC; "Religious Life," Part I, 478; Lawton, "Religious Life," 71–72.

16. David Thorpe to John Mooney, January 25, 1863, Dabbs Papers, Thorpe Series, SHC; Raymond, "Religious Life," Part I, 479–80; Towne Diary, 52, 162; Lawton, "Religious Life," 36–37.

17. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, 272–73, BC; Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 93–94; Towne Diary, 52, 162.

18. Towne Diary, 52, 162: John L. Field to George W. Moore, March 21, 1833, HSSCC; *SCA*, June 26, 1840; Pearson, *Port Royal*, 43–44; Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 88–89, 93–94.

19. *SCA*, April 18, 1843, July 28, 1843, September 6, 1859.

20. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, October 7, 1849, 271–74, BC; *SCA*, October 30, 1846, October 30, 1847. "Seekin' " was practiced among other African-American slaves. See Charles A. Raymond, "The Religious Life of the Negro Slave," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 27 (October, 1863); Part II, 680–82.

21. Mikell, *Chariot Wheels*, 137–39, Raymond, "Religious Life," Part II, 680–81; Higginson, *Army Life*, 194–95; Cooley, *School Acres*, 151–53; Lawton, "Religious Life," 143–45; Parsons, *Folk-lore of the Sea Islands*, 204–5; Allen Diary, 155; Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 254–55.

22. John W. Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 373; Lawton, "Religious Life," 170–80; Parsons, *Folk-lore of the Sea Islands*, 204–5; Cooley, *School Acres*, 151–53; Mikell, *Chariot Wheels*; Guthrie, "Catching Sense," Chapter 5; Raymond, "Religious Life," Part II, 680–82.

23. *SCA*, August 11, 1843.

24. Mark Hanna Watkins, "The West African 'Bush' School," *Journal of Sociology* 48 (1943): 66–67; Warren L. d'Azevedo, "Common Principles of Variant Kinship Structures among the Golas of Western Liberia," *American Anthropologist* 64 no. 3, 505; James L. Gibbs, Jr. "The Kpelle of Liberia," in James L. Gibbs, Jr. ed., *Peoples of Africa* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), 219–22; Ruth Finnegan, *Limba Stories and Story Telling* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 21–23; Michael Jackson, *The Kuranko: Dimensions of Social Reality in a West African Society* (London: C. Hurst, 1977), 34, 182–84, 202–3; George Harley and George Schwab, "The Mano of Liberia," in Carleton S. Coon, ed., *A Reader in General Anthropology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1960), 348–49, 359–60, 364–65, 369; Folkways Research Series, *Tribes of the Western Province and the Dewoin People* (Monrovia: Dept of Interior, 1955), 11–22; *Traditional History and Folklore of the Gleho Tribe*, 2 vols. (Monrovia: Dept. of Interior, 1955 and 1961) II: 83; Harris and Sawyerr, *Mende Belief*, 47–49; Warren L. d'Azevedo, *Gola of Liberia*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1972) II: 312–13; and "Gola Poro and Sande: Primal Tasks in Social Custodianship," 98–104; M. C. Jedrej, "Structural Aspects of a West African Secret Society," 136; Carolina H. Bledsoe, "Stratification and Sande Politics," 143–45; and Svend Holsoe, "Notes on the Vai Sande Society in Liberia," 97–107, all in *Ethnologische Zeitschrift Zürich* 1 (1980). For a discussion of the relationship between African-American fraternal orders and West African secret societies, see Betty M. Kuyk, "The African Derivation of Black Fraternal Orders in the United States," *Comparative Studies in Societies and History* 25, no. 4 (October, 1983): 559–94.

25. Jackson, *The Kuranko*, 34, 204, 206–7, 211, 221; Finnegan, *Limba Stories*, 23–33; Harley and Schwab, "The Mano," 348–49, 360–69; Little, *Mende*, 225–27, and "The Role of the Secret Society in Cultural Specialization," *American Anthropologist* 51 (1949): 199–

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Mr. Abraham Jenkins

I'LL GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF PEOPLE WHO REALLY MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THESE ISLANDS

554 Sometimes people don't recognize the hard work of people behind the scenes. I'll give you an example of people who really made a difference in these islands. Mrs. Alleen Brewer Wood came to Johns Island in 1929. Her husband, Rev. Brewer, was the pastor of two churches on the island. She was quite a community person. She would help with anything that needed doing.

[957] These were the days when people depended on root medicine and midwifery, what I call indirect health care. It was not the approved method of health care, but people had their own methods for taking care of problems. Mrs. Wood was around in that time when we were trying to get people to feel better about themselves, and trying to teach them about self-respect. She was one of the persons that we call the "grandmoms of the islands," instrumental in so many little things that you don't hear that much about. She helped lay down some of the foundation for the projects that came to Johns Island. Later on she taught the Citizenship School classes on Edisto.

554 Rev. McKinley Washington was one of those people that my daddy really
●793 relied on. He would call him up every Sunday morning before church and talk over with him the things he would like to see discussed in church—voter registration or whatever the issue was. He was just a young minister in those days, right out of school. He started the NAACP here. And later they formed

[668] a group from the Presbyterian church called the Self-Development of People
[794] to deal with the needs of people on Edisto. They bought an old school building (used to be the school for the white kids) and used it as a community building.

When Esau was working through the Charleston Citizens' Committee, which took in all of the sea islands, Rev. Washington was his connection for

[178] Edisto and Yonges islands. People were always reluctant about how fast to move to bring about change. They will go with you for awhile, but then if it looks like you're not giving up, some will want to put the brakes on. So Esau had to have people that would keep that motivation going. And McKinley was one of those people. He's a real good speaker. His voice is deep and heavy, and when he starts preaching, you have to listen to him. So my daddy used him as an inspirator.

When Rev. Willis Goodwin came to Johns Island to pastor in 1966, people just looked on the ministry as church on Sunday. When Rev. Goodwin got here he changed all that. His ministry was seven days per week. He would go around to the people who were sick or were in need—and everybody was in

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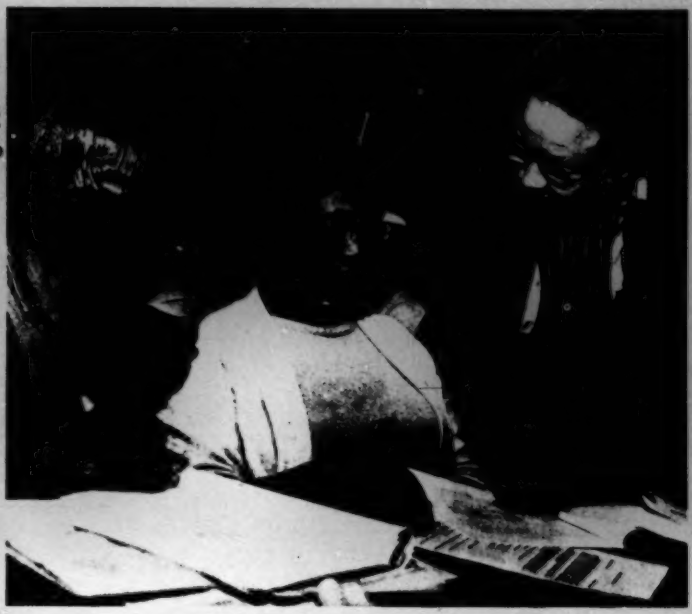

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need for something. He tried to find out what he could do to help. He would go around to the piccolo joints and talk to people, and go down to the fishermen and talk to them, go to the growers and talk to them. After awhile he didn't have to buy anything for the people. He was getting everything donated. Once people saw that they could depend on him, then he started getting into the social issues. That's when he started working with my daddy. Then they would call in McKinley and some of these other people, and they would brainstorm about the problems. To me, Rev. Goodwin did more for people on these islands, especially from the pulpit, than anyone since my daddy.

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Rev. A. C. Jenkins

ANY MINISTER WHO DOESN'T TAP INTO THOSE DEEP FEELINGS WILL NOT SURVIVE HERE

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I want to bring a world view into the church—a view that includes justice and liberation in Latin America and in South Africa. My challenge is to make it real to the people on Johns Island, and if it is real for them, they want to shout about it. The way I can touch those feelings is to end my sermon with the words to one of the old songs.

Any minister who doesn't tap into those deep feelings will not survive here. The people will go elsewhere. I love serving on Johns Island. Before I was here I was at an elite church in Charleston. Amens were few due to a different worship experience.

Mr. Gerald Mackey

I TAKE MY TAPE RECORDER TO CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY

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I enjoy the older people. I'm always around them, and I talk with them often. I enjoy the singing. In fact I take my tape recorder to church every Sunday, hoping for one of the old spirituals raised from the floor. Then I play them all through the week on my stereo here or in my car. It's very uplifting. I don't miss any opportunity I get to hear the older people sing. To me, that's pride. I really enjoy listening to them and I think it's great that they have managed to preserve that aspect of our history.

I'm afraid that eventually after all these people are gone that the younger people will not feel as comfortable carrying on. I wish it wouldn't happen, though.

491 one-lane affairs, which pass through woods of oak and pine
346 and marshes filled with cat tails. The church itself is an
461 impressive structure, built by the cooperative labor of the
476 men many years ago, each of whom hauled an allotment of con-
493 crete blocks from the boat landing in ox carts over the
368 deeply rutted sand roads. It was built in a location equally
distant from the "four corners" which were populated at that
794 time, and faces due east. Preceding the major morning ser-
mon, three Sunday-school classes are held simultaneously in
the church sanctuary, with oral reading and discussion of a
printed lesson a major component of the lessons for all age
796 groups. Formal preaching is held one Sunday each month, with
793 morning and evening services conducted by a well-educated
794 minister who comes from Georgetown. On other Sundays, ser-
vices are conducted by church members. The most prestigious
794 social group on the island is that of the Board of Deacons
511 of the church; this small group of six or seven of the oldest
men conducts the major business of the island. Other busi-
595 ness is conducted by two women's clubs or "lodges," which
often meet on Sunday afternoons in the abandoned schoolhouse.
Other social activities are parties, adult education classes,
music and dancing, and story telling. Community parties
527 are sometimes held in the old school building, and adult
873 education classes have been conducted there as well. Music
533 is a highly valued activity in every age group, as evidenced
535 both by the singing for Sunday services and by the dancing

796 services as depicted in the literature is still rather accurate and need not be entertained here, except to say that the general patternings of the services and demonstrations of faith via "shouting" has remained as a center of church services.

The Church Structure

794 (793) The Pastor is the head of each church. There may or may not be a pastor "in training" to assist as needed. Under the Pastor is the Elder Council of Deacons. This body is comprised of the oldest male members of the congregations. The Deacons Council, through a committee structure, runs the affairs of the church. Next in the structure are the Elder Mothers, followed by the general congregations. Aside from their committee responsibilities, the Elder Deacons take part in Sunday services. An extremely learned body, the Elders are easily as able in the scriptures as the Pastors. Their learned abilities and oratorical skills are particularly evident during Funeral services. In these services, the Deacons take turns recalling through their eyes the life of the deceased person. Their eulogies delivered by these Soul stirring orators are the highlighted feature of the rites.

771 554

The Practice of the Sea Island Religion

The islander does not simply outgrow religion. On the

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that was distinctive. He taught his wife Milly (Illustration 34[A]) how to make "goof bags." Apparently his magic was no more potent than Gullah Jack's when it came to protecting himself. Gullah Jack was executed in Charleston for his part in the uprising of 1822; and when Jim Polecat was old, decrepit, and a nuisance, his own children pushed him into the fireplace, and burned him to ashes. Milly must have been a peculiar character. She would turn her back on you when she had anything to say. When her cabin was built she insisted on having no windows—a good African mode of construction. She said: "Door's enough to watch." When urged to have them for ventilation, she insisted that "Chimney gives enough air." There were no windows put in. The walls of her cabin were lined with boxes and trunks that had belonged to her children, all of whom were dead or in the penitentiary. It is no wonder she was moody, and that the other Negroes were afraid of her. They might well be, for—in addition to being looked upon as a witch—she was the mother of seven murderers.

In every Negro settlement there are usually frizzled chickens.[31] These curious-looking birds are supposed to be on the watch for goof bags or any "sleight-o'-hand" buried under doorsteps. Josephine tells me that she always keeps one around for such a purpose. If the chicken "come clean" (loses its feathers), it is a sure proof that it has scratched up something intended for its owner's bad luck. So much for black magic. You hear little about it, but the belief in its efficacy turns up every now and then when least expected.

At the risk of being tiresome, it may be well to call attention to various obscure customs among the Negroes that could easily be passed over as idiosyncrasies. From the pulpit of the Jewtown African Baptist Church I heard Parson Joe Lowman say with a weak voice that he was feelin' very po'ly and in no condition to preach a Christmas sermon, but by the grace of God he would do his best. I was astonished to find, as he warmed to his subject, "The Christ Child and the Three Wise Men," that his voice grew stronger and stronger. When his sermon was finished, I realized that I would never hear a better one, and that he had either received supernatural aid or was a consummate artist—perhaps both. Later, I read an article by Morton C. Kahn, on "Adventures in Medical Research among Two Strange Tribes of Dutch Guiana,"[32] in which the author described the greeting employed by the Bush Negroes, the translation of which runs somewhat as follows: "Howdy, white man.

[31] Captain R. S. Rattray tells us such freakish birds are called asense chickens in Ashanti.
[32] "Where Black Man Meets Red." Natural History, May, 1936.

[A] [For Illustration 34, see Category 754, plate facing p. 225--Analyst]

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How are you, brother?" The reply is: "So-so, Granman. How are you, brother?" The writer explains that "It does not do to claim that one is feeling too well, otherwise the enmity of the spirits might be incurred." From this it can be seen why there was a wide divergence between Lowman's words and his performance, and also why our older Negroes always appear to enjoy poor health.

Another tradition caused me to be embarrassed for the poor preacher, who seemed to have a strange affliction. I furtively looked around to see how the younger members of the congregation were taking the curious performance. Their matter-of-course attitude should have made me less innocent. However, it was not until I heard other preachers give the same effect—the mewing of a harassed cat combined with the bark of a half-strangled dog—that I realized my ludicrous mistake. At the peak of the preacher's harangue the words pour out so fast that he has no time to get his breath, and his gasping efforts cause the outrageous sounds that appear to have no name with us, but which are described by Martha Beckwith, in *Black Roadways*, under the name of "trooping." [33] She believes that the exercise "if persisted in, will produce that semiconscious condition so favorable to the communication of spirits." But it has always seemed to me that religious ecstasy is itself the source of the strange manifestation. When the preacher has reached his rhythmical best; when an insistent tapping of toes on the floor provides an under-current of sound along with a feeling of uncanny suspense; when the "moaning" (as the peculiarly beautiful humming of the Negroes is called) takes on an elemental quality that comes from everywhere and from nowhere in particular—then the snapping point is reached for someone, and you hear a piercing shriek. A woman stands up with stark, stiff arms stretched high above her head. If she makes much of a commotion she is supported into the open air to recover. When I was a little child I saw a woman who had gone into this rigid state carried to a pump beside the church, where, under the spout, she was quickly brought to her senses. In the House of Prayer in Savannah (where the pillars are thickly padded, and the sawdust is inches deep on the floor) I saw a "lone shouter" fall into a trance that lasted half

[33] *It is possible that the tradition was carried to Jamaica by Elder George Lisle, the former slave of Mr. Sharp, a loyalist of Savannah, who gave him his liberty. Lisle preached in Georgia during the Revolution. At the close of the war he went to Jamaica. Though an ex-slave, he organized, in Kingston in 1784, the first Baptist church on the island, and became "the chief human factor in the salvation of Jamaica." (L. G. Jordan, Negro Baptist History in the United States.)*

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763 764 171 spot long enough to find out many fascinating things about Africa's black residents, mentions the fact that "In the cold wet months it is inconvenient to have . . . a [funeral] feast, and if some one dies at that time of year, the feast is often postponed until the dry season."

793 796 537 Negro preachers—particularly those who possess good voices and a store of spicy proverbs—often deliver sermons and offer prayers that stick in the mind. One I heard in Liberty County (the one whom I thought afflicted) expatiated on the subject of sin. He made it clear that certain types were worse than others. "Sin is a mean thing," and his tone was scornful; but when he said: "Self is a terrible thing!" it was thunderous and convincing. In a barn of a church in Camden County the substance of the preacher's prayer was in these touchingly earnest words: "We're down here, Lord, chewin' on dry bones an' swallerin' bitter pills. We can't do nothin' without You." Whatever may be said about the emotional character of the religion of our American Negro, it must be conceded that his sins are of the flesh rather than the spirit. He is generous with his last crust, and there would be no need of orphanages if white people, in proportion to their means, adopted as many children as colored people.

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175 567 191 When it comes to terse economy of speech we are obliged to concede that no one can equal the Negro. Mrs. Annie Arnold, born on St. Simon's in 1844, gave me the perfect example of this fact in recounting a bit of local history. A cargo of slaves of the Ebo tribe had been landed at a suspiciously secluded spot on the west side of the island. They preferred death to a life of captivity, and as they walked into the water the leader said: "The water brought us here. The water will take us away." No one but an African could have expressed such poignant unhappiness in so few words. In view of the fact known to traders that the Ebo men made poor slaves and were prone to suicide,[35] the account is probably true. The Negroes believe the story, and to this day they have to be extremely hungry to fish by themselves at Ebo Landing. One night a few years ago some colored boys braved tradition, and went 'possum hunting in the neighborhood. I have my own ideas as to the real cause of their terrifying experience, but the fact remains that no others have been tempted to repeat it.

175 567

Sir Charles Lyell tells us that "The slave trade ceased in 1796, and but few negroes were smuggled into Georgia from foreign countries, except indirectly for

[35] For this reason as few as possible were accepted by the traders.

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BAPTISM

795 533 On a frosty Sunday morning many years ago, I happened to be on the bank of the Frederica River south of the Fort. From a distance I heard the Negroes singing what sounded like a dirge, but as they came closer I found it was a baptismal song, sung by the procession which had formed, as is customary, at the church a mile away.[12] It was headed by the minister, followed by his assistants, the deacons and other members in pairs, while the "candidates" brought up the rear. The girls were dressed in white, but the boys wore ordinary overalls and work shirts. The solemn dignity of the occasion was impressive. Joe Lowman, one of the assisting preachers, with great earnestness addressed the congregation. He exhorted those of his hearers who had not been baptized to take no chances. In an intimate conversational tone he gave his views on the subject. He wanted it clearly understood that he was not prepared to say, "nobody was going to be saved who had only had his head sprinkled"—but he, for one, was not for disobeying instructions. The Lord ordered us to go down into the water, and that was all there was about it. It was like sending a boy to the store for potatoes; if he brought home turnips it would not be the same thing at all.

795 194 [193]

After the discourse and the usual prayers,[13] which were punctuated in the African manner with encouraging responses, rhythmically delivered, the officiating minister went down into the river to the spot selected by the deacon, who, with his staff to show the depth, had preceded him. While those on the river bank sang

[782]

[12] Before leaving the church the minister calls his congregation to order, and gives them some last-minute instructions. One cautioned his flock to conduct themselves on the way to the water in an orderly manner befitting the solemnity of the occasion. He said: "Now, I don't want any talkin' or laughin'.—Don' y'u begin to tell about your bean patch an' your peas. This ain' no time for it."

[794] [511]

[13] In a recent book the assertion is made that our Negroes "pray to the river" when they are baptized. This sounds like an African survival until it is learned that "to" means "beside" in this instance. It is no wonder that those who are unfamiliar with our Negroes and their use of words make curious mistakes.

[114] [196]

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159 567 always attended early mass. She never married; her sweetheart, Ishmael, belonged to another family, and his owners, thinking he would not be worth much to them in the field if his wife were on another plantation, encouraged a match with one of their own slaves.

159 To the end of her life, she smoked a pipe, and cooked her food in a black pot over a fire in the yard exactly as she had done in her youth. She must have been very strong, as she rowed a boat, did her half-acre of cotton, and, in her own words, "never knew what it was to be tired." She was a hundred and nine years old when she died in 1936, and evidently came of an exceptionally long-lived family, for her father was a centenarian, her sister lived to be a hundred and eight, and a cousin, also born in 1826, outlived her. Janey was straight and healthy to the last, and the sphinx-like, unwrinkled face in her coffin was like a piece of smooth black ebony. I had not realized in life how handsome she was or how Egyptian were her features. The inexpressible dignity of that dark mask so impressed me that I went back three times to make sure I would not forget it.

"BURYIN'"

764 533 Old residents of St. Simon's tell me that before the days of automobiles, when even horses [22] and wagons were luxuries, a Negro "buryin'" was an impressive affair. The mourners sang as they walked from the church, where the service was held, to the graveyard a mile away. The singers could be heard the minute they left the church, for at that time "they opened their mouths. They weren't like the young people today—too proud to sing." [23]

764 [492] [493] [562] [481] [793] The home-made coffin, lined with "paper cambric" and covered with black calico or darkened with lampblack, was placed in the "rough box" and carried on a one-horse wagon. Only the preacher rode with the driver. The men walked single file on one side of the road and the women on the other.

When the minister could not come to the island for the church service, it was not held until his next visit—possibly in three weeks, sometimes in three months. In the days when "Reverend" Andrew Neal officiated, if he was urgently needed to

[22] After the War Between the States only a vicious stallion, belonging to the Coupers, was left on St. Simon's. It was necessary to hobble him before he could be used. There were plenty of ponies, called "tackies," living on the salt marshes; but Joe tells me they were wild, like deer, and it never paid to buy one.

[23] It was said of Adam and Neptun' Small and MacWilliams that they could be heard a mile —than which, according to slave standards, there was no higher praise.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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"preach the funeral," [24] the St. Simon's Negroes would row all the way to Savannah —over eighty miles—to get him. They landed at Frederica, where the First African Baptist Church was located.

At Aaron's funeral Laura gave the time-honored dramatic touch by growing hysterical, throwing up her arms, and screaming: "Good-bye Aaron—y'u gone forever." While the clods were shoveled upon the coffin, singing providentially kept us from hearing the sound. Different men, headed by the undertaker, took turns filling in the grave. The way they joked and laughed as they worked rather shocked me. I understand, however, that Africans show the same levity after distressing occasions.

M. H. Kingsley, in *Travels in West Africa*, mentions the intense love of the African for funerals, and, according to the descriptions given by other explorers, there is a striking similarity in the burial customs of the natives and their rural American cousins. In Africa it is believed that the position of the ghost in the other world requires that the funeral be as expensive as the family can possibly provide. Furthermore, without a fitting ceremony the departed spirit cannot reach its final destination, but lingers among the living, making conditions very uncomfortable for them. The Negroes of our Southern states show the same feeling about funerals. They spare no expense in making them elaborate affairs. One that took place on St. Simon's years ago will long be remembered: "Why, Mrs. Parris', it cost four hundred dollars. They sent to Savannah for flowers, and she was buried in new white slippers that cost six dollars . . . !" I notice that the American Negro, no matter what the work or business in hand, puts it aside for such an event. To pay the cost of a funeral that will be a credit to the corpse as well as his family, the survivors will mortgage what property they may have, if they have not been so provident as to take out an insurance policy, join a "Bury League," or pay to some society or lodge dues which range from ten to twenty-five cents a week.

[24] When Quarterman's son-in-law died, his daughter said to me: "Tell the old man my husband died three weeks ago and the funeral will be preached next Sunday." Then she asked me if I would please give her a black hat. A Northern friend frequently sent me boxes of summer hats in the autumn. If the original owners could have seen them in winter on the dusky wearers, they would have been surprised. The fun of fitting out the singers with becoming hats has always made me wonder if I hadn't missed my calling.

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533 567 Quarterman told me that when the Negroes "suspicioned" someone was telling tales to the driver to get one of them a whipping, they would sing a song like the following while at work in the field:

[539]

O Judyas he wuz a 'ceitful man
He went an' betray a mos' innocen' man.
Fo' thirty pieces a silver dat it wuz done
He went in de woods an' e' self he hung.

● 793 533 A Negro "stump-knocker"—as itinerant preachers without a regular charge used to be called—frankly told me he wasn't much on preaching, but when it came to singing he always got his people—and a meal. Another preacher of this class, with a remarkable flow of rhythmic words and a fine grasp of the dramatic build-up—not necessarily connected with ideas—boasted to me of his ability to get his congregation "goin'."

FIVE FINGERS IN THE BOLL

248 533 When I asked Josephine what the words "five fingers in the boll" meant, she explained that in the shade at the bottom of the stalk of cotton the bolls are likely to be rotten; they come off in the hand, and "y'u can't make any time grabbin' de cotton out uv 'em." "Fingers" are the compartments holding the white fiber. The song has reference to the variety that contains five in a boll, but I am told that some have three, and others four. I confess I never noticed how many there were.

533 539

Way down in the bottom—whah the cotton boll's a rotten
Won' get my hundud [20] all day
Way down in the bottom—whah the cotton boll's a rotten
Won' get my hundud all day.
Befo'e I'll be beated—befo'e I'll be cheated
I'll leave five finguhs in the boll
Befo'e I'll be beated—befo'e I'll be cheated
I'll leave five finguhs in the boll.
Black man beat me—white man cheat me
Won' get my hundud all day
Black man beat me—white man cheat me
Won' get my hundud all day.

[433] [248] [20] Ninety pounds of cotton was looked upon as the least a hand should pick in a day.

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out crossing the feet, to the tune of a spiritual. Nor did the Negroes take their violins into the praise houses, for the missionaries also taught them that fiddle music was sinful since the fiddle furnished the tunes for the old dances. The last violin on St. Helena Island before the Civil War is said to have been owned by a Negro on Coffin's Point, but he got rid of it before "big gun shoot," as the Negroes called the battle of Port Royal.

Sir Charles Lyell observed the same kind of religious worship on the Georgia Sea Islands and mainland. "On the Hopeton plantation above twenty violins have been silenced by the Methodist missionaries," he wrote in 1845. "At the Methodist prayer-meetings, they are permitted to move rapidly in a ring, joining hands in token of brotherly love, presenting first the right hand and then the left, in which manœuvre, I am told, they sometimes contrive to take enough exercise to serve as a substitute for the dance, it being, in fact, a kind of spiritual *boulanger* [?], while the singing of psalms, in and out of chapel, compensates in no small degree for the songs they have been required to renounce."[80]

The religious life of the slaves was organized by the whites upon the same plan as their own. On plantations of any size, slaves who had joined the church were formed into a class, at the head of which was one of their own number, acting as deacon or leader, who was also sometimes a licensed preacher.[81] The leader who was the head of the praise house often decided in council with his subordinates, the watchmen, whether a candidate for member-

[80] Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, I, 269, 270.
[81] "Negro Slavery at the South," DeBow, *Industrial Resources of the United States*, II, 251.

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ship was worthy of admittance. The Reverend Charles C. Jones, after many years spent in preaching to sea-island and mainland slaves concluded that they were inclined to place true religion in profession, in forms and ordinances, and in excited states of feeling, and true conversion in dreams, visions, trances, and voices, "all bearing a perfect or striking resemblance to some form or type which has been handed down for generations, or which has been originated in the wild fancy of some religious teacher among them."[82] They offered these dreams and visions to the church sessions as evidences of conversion just as the whites were inclined to do in camp meetings.

They were also quick to follow the custom of the whites in "churching" offending members. "The discipline of colored members," wrote the Reverend Mr. Jones, who, no doubt, had taken part on many such occasions, "is involved, tedious, vexatious and disgusting." Excommunications and suspensions were of "perpetual occurrence, for crimes shocking in character, and of themselves sufficient to show the general state of morals; such for example as adultery, fornication, theft, lying, drunkenness, quarreling, and fighting." The Reverend Mr. Jones thought that the Negroes perverted the gospel and colored their religious practices with their African superstitions. Thus their "doctors, prophets, and conjurers" modified the teachings of the white preachers.[83]

The church was not only responsible for giving Christianity to the Negroes, but also to a large extent for teaching a few of them to read and write. The early statutes

[82] Jones, *Religious Instruction of the Negroes*, pp. 125, 126.
[83] *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 127, 128.

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curtseys, and the men touched their hats in a soldier's salute, or swept them quickly from their heads.

The Reverend Richard Fuller created a sensation when he arrived. Stares brightened and eyes grew moist. Amid shouts of "Bress de Lo'd, Bres de Lo'd!" "Hebenly Massa!" "Gra-a-ate King!" he mounted to the platform. When all were seated a quaint old man, clad in cotton checks, bowed from many years of cotton hoeing, stepped out on the platform and, leaning on his cane, gently swaying his body as if to keep time, struck up in a shrill, cracked voice the tune:

"Ma-a-assa Fullah a sittin' on de tree ob life
For to yeddy when Jordan roll,
Roll, Jordan; roll, Jordan,
Roll, Jordan, roll."

And then a plain, middle-aged black preacher came forward and commenced a prayer, which he pursued at great length with frequent interruptions from the congregation of "Amen," "Glory," and "Lo'd, do!" They had already been to their praise-house meetings twice during the week and some of them earlier that morning, but they were none the less eager for this Sunday-noon meeting when fellow freedmen from all over the Island gathered for worship and recreation.[2]

A few former planters, like the Reverend Richard Fuller, had returned to Beaufort to try to take up life again in the little town now overrun with freedmen, Fed-

[2] The foregoing description is based on Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour*; "The South As It Is," *Nation*, Dec. 1865, pp. 746-747; J. W. Alvord, *Letters from the South*, pp. 8-10; Charles Nordoff, *The Freedmen of South Carolina*; S. G. W. Benjamin, "The Sea Islands," *Harper's Monthly*, LVII, 839-861.

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had gone away with her and "married." She had begged him to return and so he did, but after a few months he had gone off again to live with the other wife down the road a few tasks away. He was in the meeting-house yonder, a prayin' now.[24]

After Reconstruction, one heard fewer of such stories on St. Helena, for the church officials attempted to discipline all offenders. Although there were fewer cases of desertion, illegitimacy was none the less frequent despite the "churching." The significant change in family life was the elevated status of the husband. In attempting to stabilize family life, the superintendents and teachers had appealed to the man as the head of the family and had urged him to assume his rightful responsibilities. Black men who had been accustomed to the dominance of women during slavery came now to warn their wives to keep their places. The land which they bought from the Government was in their own names and they came to look upon the house as theirs, not that of their wives as in slavery days.

Freedom brought few changes in the religious life of the people. They still clung to their plantation praise houses, but instead of one praise house to a plantation they occasionally had as many as two or three. Besides this they built a few new churches, for "Brick Church" was too near Ladies Island to be within convenient reach of all the Islanders. But their church forms they changed very little except to make the praise house leaders subject to the Negro preachers of their churches whereas during ante-bellum days they had been subject to the white ministers.

[24] See Reid, *After the War*, p. 106n.

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When a person wished to become a member of the church, he must go into seclusion for two or three weeks until he had received a vision that his sins had been forgiven. During this time of seclusion, he was said to be "seeking." Upon the genuineness of his vision the praise leader must pass judgment. Then the candidate must go through the catechism, thoroughly memorizing every sentence, and pass two examinations in the praise house and one in the church before being admitted to baptism. Once admitted, he wore the head cloth of the candidate until the day of baptism which was usually on communion Sunday. Dressed in white robes, the candidates came to the river at high tide to receive the ordinance of baptism. Miss Towne described a baptism in January, 1876, as being lengthy but impressive. Before communion, which preceded the baptismal service, the minister told the church members "that they were not to take a long drink of wine, but a sip only—that he had been told that 'some of they said they meant to get their two cents' worth.' (That is the amount generally subscribed by each to buy the wine.) He told them that was very naughty conduct in church members." The elders, Miss Towne explained, "used to take the first filled cup, throw back their heads, and drain it with gusto. That was their idea of partaking of the Lord's Supper." Communion over, the members filed outside to the river bank and amid prayer and song the candidates were immersed.

As in slavery days, the praise leaders attempted to regulate the affairs of the praise members, so in freedom the officers of the praise houses and the churches sought to regulate all the private and public disputes arising on

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the Island. As one of the preachers explained, "when one member gets wrong and the case cannot be settled at home it is taken to the church and sometimes the member is subjected [to] little embarrassment." [25]

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It was many years, however, before the praise houses and churches obtained the prestige in settling disputes that they exercise today. In the first days of freedom, the cases going up to the "unjust law," as the people term legal processes, were numerous. Miss Towne's brother, William Edward Towne, was appointed a magistrate for St. Helena in 1869. "Some days half a dozen cases are brought before him," wrote Miss Towne, "and one day in the week, Tuesday, he and the other two selectmen have a meeting and make out jury lists, and do all sorts of township business. . . . I think a constable or two are here every day, to get orders or bring culprits." [26]

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In 1866, as it has already been pointed out, the school farms were sold and the plantation schools abandoned, but the fund arising from the sale of the land was set aside for the establishment of schools in St. Helena's and St. Luke's parishes "without distinction of race or color." By 1871 this fund had amounted to something more than $68,000.[27] The benevolent associations, such as the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association, the Germantown Associ-

[25] MS, "St. Helena." In possession of Penn School.

[26] *Letters and Diary*, pp. 210, 211.

[27] *Senate Mis. Doc.* no. 79, 41st Cong., 3d sess. In response to an inquiry from Congress as to "the total amount of funds in the hands of any officer of the Government, set apart for the purposes of education in the parishes of St. Helena and St. Luke, in Beaufort County, South Carolina," Commissioner A. Pleasanton replied: " . . . there is invested in United States bonds . . . about $57,000; and there is in the hands of Collector Cloutman, of the second district, South Carolina, between three and four thousand dollars, and in the hands of Hon. W. E. Wording, not yet turned over to Collector Cloutman, between eight and nine thousand dollars."